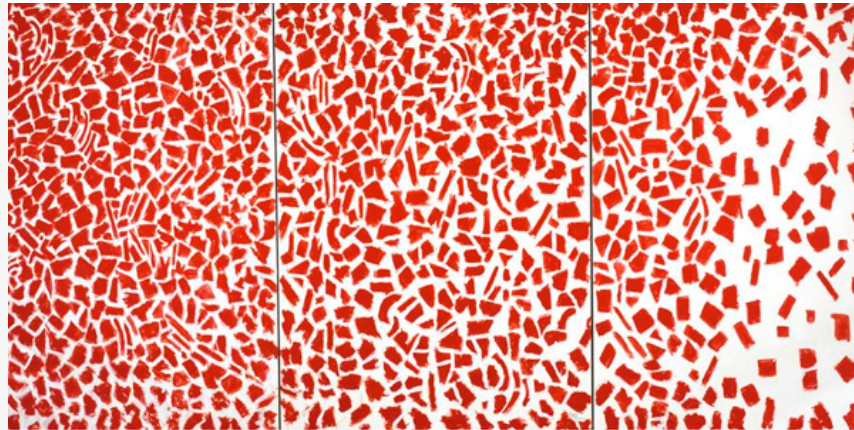


Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

*From the Center for Action and
Contemplation*



Week Twenty-three

Contemplation and Racism

The Unspoken Privilege of Being White

Monday, June 8, 2020

For a long time, I naively hoped that racism was a thing of the past. Those of us who are white have a very hard time seeing that we constantly receive special treatment [because of social systems built to prioritize people with white skin]. This systemic “white privilege” makes it harder for us to recognize the experiences of people of color as valid and real when they speak of racial profiling, police brutality, discrimination in the workplace,

continued segregation in schools, lack of access to housing, and on and on. This is not the experience of most white people, so how can it be true? *Now, we are being shown how limited our vision is.*

Because we have never been on the other side, we largely do not recognize the structural access we enjoy, the trust we think we deserve, the assumption that we always belong and do not have to earn our belonging. All this we take for granted as normal. Only the outsider can spot these attitudes in us. [And we are quick to dismiss what is apparent to our neighbors who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color [BIPOC] from their lived experience.]

Of course, we all belong. There is no issue of more or less in the eyes of an Infinite God. Yet the ego believes the lie that there isn't enough to go around and that for me to succeed or win, someone else must lose. And so we've greedily supported systems and governments that work to our own advantage at the expense of others, most often people of color or any highly visible difference. The advancement of the white person was too often at the cost of other people not advancing at all. A minor history course should make that rather clear.

I would have never seen my own white privilege if I had not been forced

outside of my dominant white culture by travel, by working in the jail, by hearing stories from counselees and, frankly, by making a complete fool of myself in so many social settings—most of which I had the freedom to avoid!

Power [and privilege] never surrenders without a fight. If your entire life has been to live unquestioned in your position of power—a power that was culturally given to you, but you think you earned—there is almost no way you will give it up without major failure, suffering, humiliation, or defeat. As long as we really want to be on top and would take advantage of any privilege or short cut to get us there, we will never experience true “liberty, equality, fraternity” (revolutionary ideals that endure as mottos for France and Haiti).

If God operates as me, God operates as “thee” too, and the playing field is utterly leveled forever. Like Jesus, Francis, Clare, and many other humble mystics, we then rush down instead of up. In the act of letting go and choosing to become servants, community can at last be possible. The illusory state of privilege just gets in the way of neighboring and basic human friendship.

Gateway to Action & Contemplation:

What word or phrase resonates with

or challenges me? What sensations do I notice in my body? What is mine to do?

Prayer for Our Community:

O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other's burdens and the weight of glory. Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our world. [Please add your own intentions.] . . . Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God, amen.

[Listen to Fr. Richard read the prayer.](#)

Story from Our Community:

Living blocks from the scene of George Floyd's murder, I find it so hard to stay centered in love while in the midst of breaking news that is breaking my heart. I have cycled several times through the emotions of denial, sadness, anger and hope. . . As I stand in circle with my black, brown and white neighbors each evening before curfew, I have real hopes that our community and others across the country will finally confront the racism that infects the many systems of our city, state and country. — Michael T.

[Share your own story with us.](#)

Adapted from “Richard Rohr on White Privilege,” interview with Reverend Romal J. Tune (January 19, 2016). Available at <https://sojo.net/articles/richard-rohr-white-privilege>.

Image credit: *Red Azaleas Singing and Dancing Rock and Roll Music* (detail), Alma Thomas, 1976, Smithsonian American Art Museum, bequest of the artist, 1980.36.2A-C, Washington, DC.

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News from the CAC

[Join the Poor People's Campaign Online](#)

Stand in solidarity with poor and low-

wealth people across the United States to urge our leaders to address injustices of systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, militarism, and religious nationalism in this digital event on June 20. [RSVP \(no cost!\)](#) and see the faces and hear the voices of poverty and move with them for justice.

Watch the Free "Wisdom in Times of Crisis" Series

Can COVID-19 help us find a deeper truth? This time of uncertainty has been challenging for many people, and so we've created a [free 20-video series](#) featuring each of our five faculty speaking on the pandemic. Watch as Richard Rohr, Cynthia Bourgeault, Brian McLaren, Barbara Holmes, and James Finley share what this moment has to teach us, relevant practices, and the contemplative wisdom to be found in death.

Action & Contemplation

2020 Daily Meditations Theme

What does God ask of us? To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. —Micah 6:8

Franciscan Richard Rohr founded the Center for Action and Contemplation in 1987 because he saw a deep need for the integration of both action and contemplation. If we pray but don't act justly, our faith won't bear fruit. And

without contemplation, activists burn out and even well-intended actions can cause more harm than good. In today's religious, environmental, and political climate our compassionate engagement is urgent and vital.

In this year's Daily Meditations, Father Richard helps us learn the dance of action and contemplation. Each week builds on previous topics, but you can join at any time! Click the video to learn more about the theme and to find reflections you may have missed.



[Click here to learn about contemplative prayer and other forms of meditation.](#) For frequently asked questions—such as what versions of the Bible Father Richard recommends or how to ensure you receive every meditation—[please see our email FAQ.](#) Visit cac.org to explore other ways to connect with the Center for Action and Contemplation.



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Inspiration for this week's banner image: The question is whether or not we will recognize our wounds and the source of our anger so that we can heal ourselves and others, and awaken to our potential to embody the beloved community. —Barbara Holmes



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